

Jack Assaf

Graduation Year: Senior

College: Engineering

Major(s): Mechanical Engineering

Minors(s): N/A

Scholar Group Membership: Tau Beta Pi, Pi Tau Sigma

Did you received other funding for this project?: College of Engineering

Could you have completed this project without CUSE funding? No

More details on CUSE funding assistance?

Project Title: Conference Attendance--Global Student Forum

Project Location: Seoul, South Korea

ND Faculty Mentor: Peter Kilpatrick

Project Type: Conference - Attendance

Why did you undertake this project/experience? Deepen your knowledge of a topic or issue, Career discernment and/or preparation

Did your funded experience help you:

[Deepen your understanding of your coursework or field of study]: Yes

[Discern your interests and post-bac goals]: Very Much

[Become confident in your ability to set and achieve your goals]: Yes

[Gain a more nuanced view of local, national, or global communities]: Very Much

[Improve your written and verbal communications skills]:Very Much

Tell us about your experience.

My biggest takeaway was hope. I had the opportunity to work with students from all over the world and think about how we, as engineers, can affect change in the developing world. It was amazing to see how we each had our unique backgrounds but had similar goals in mind even though our approaches were all different and our context for prior experience varied.

Specifically, I mostly worked with a group of three other students, one from Mexico and two from different parts of South Korea. We worked to tackle the issue of child labor in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The actual content of the project was of less importance than the process of working with each other and understanding their backgrounds. The things that were important and significant to each of them were, in some cases, vastly different than what is important and significant to me.

Describe the impact this project had, both on you as a student-scholar and on the people you worked with.

As a student-scholar, this project was impactful because it opened my eyes to the true diversity of the world. Hearing my roommate, who was from Mexico, speak about the education system there

was startling. He explained to me how teachers are selected why people go to school. I also got to hear similar background stories from students from Kenya, Greece, India, China and Belgium. Each had its own twist; some more drastic than the others.

I think that I was able to affect people because I was able to show them my excitement for teaching, not just education. A lot of people wanted to affect education in various capacities but I hope that I was an example of what it can look like to be an engineer that goes into teaching.

Describe how this experience is connected to your plans as a student or future professional.

I am doing ACE next year. I hope that my work revolves around education for a long time. I am not positive, however, that it will always be as a teacher. The opportunity to attend a conference where so many people brought different perspectives on how to bring together engineering and education has provided me with a multitude of options. I don't know if I will enact any of them but I will surely keep the perspective that I gained from this conference with me forever.

What advice would you give other students who are planning to pursue similar projects?

I think the biggest thing is to keep an open mind and push to learn more, always. There is always an opportunity to stay within what is comfortable but it is critical to push past this to get a full experience. Talk to new people and try new things, this is where I learned the most.

Additionally I would say to take a leap, try to go and learn, you will never know until you try.
